

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9807

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3882

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR BG US
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH BANGLADESH PRESIDENT ZIA: VISIT
TO THE U.S.

1. DURING MY CONVERSATION WITH BANGLADESH PRESIDENT ZIA ON JUNE 17, THE PRESIDENT ALLUDED TO THE POSSIBILITY OF HIS VISITING THE U.S. HE INTRODUCED THE SUBJECT BY SAYING HE BELIEVED IT IMPORTANT THAT MORE ABOUT WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING IN BANGLADESH DURING THE PAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN AROUND THE WORLD. HE SAID HE HAD VISITED A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AND " WAS WILLING TO GO ANYWHERE". HE THEN REFERRED TO DISCUSSIONS WHICH HE SAID HAS BEEN GOING ON ABOUT A POSSIBLE VISIT TO THE U.S. AT THIS POINT ZIA PICKED UP AN EARLIER COMMENT I HAD MADE ABOUT THE PHASING DOWN OF MARTIAL LAW AND SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE WAY AMERICANS FELT ABOUT MARTIAL LAW IN BANGLADESH. BUT, HE EXPLAINED, HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO CONTINUE MARTIAL LAW UNTIL AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS AS THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY OF GOVERNING THE NATION WITHOUT A PARLIAMENT. ZIA THEN TURNED TO ANOTHER SUBJECT AND SINCE I HAD NOT BEEN ASKED A QUESTION, I DID NOT COMMENT.

2. COMMENT: DURING THE LAST TWO MONTHS I HAVE RECEIVED
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TWO INDIRECT PROPOSALS THAT THE U.S. INVITE ZIA FOR A VISIT. ONE WAS FROM BANGLADESH UN AMBASSADOR KAISER SOON AFTER HE HAD MET WITH ZIA AND THE OTHER WAS WITH A JAGODAL LEADER AFTER ZIA HAD VISITED HIS POLITICAL BASE. I ASSUMED BOTH HAD COME FROM EITHER ZIA OR THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM. IN EACH CASE I EXPLAINED THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE WAS SIMPLY TOO FULL AND HIS PROBLEMS TOO MANY FOR

ANOTHER VISIT TO BE FIT IN. I HAD HOPED THAT THE MESSAGE MIGHT GET THROUGH AND THAT ZIA MIGHT AT LEAST DEFER HIS QUEST. BUT SUCH WAS NOT THE CASE.

3. FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN FOLLOWED UP ON THE PRESIDENT'S INITIATIVE ON THE EVENING OF JUNE 19 TO INSURE THAT I HAD UNDERSTOOD ZIA'S SOMEWHAT INDIRECT PROPOSAL. HUSAIN SECONDED THE PRESIDENT'S POINT AND THAT THERE WAS MUCH THAT HAD CHANGED IN BANLGADESH WHICH SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN IN THE U.S. AND ADDED THE ARGUMENT THAT ZIA WOULD BENEFIT FROM A DIRECT EXPOSURE TO U.S. DEMOCRACY. I REPLIED AS I HAVE TO THE OTHERS THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SCHEDULE SIMPLY OFFERED NO PROSPECT FOR A VISIT.

4. ALTHOUGH I HAVE CONVEYED DISCOURAGING REPLIES, I WOULD APPRECIATE NEW INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS SUBJECT FROM THE DEPARTMENT. THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN BANGLADESH, PARTICULARLY AS REPRESENTED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, AND THERE WOULD BE MERIT IN RECOGNIZING THEM. WHATEVER EXPLANATION WE GIVE ZIA FOR OUR INABILITY TO INVITE HIM, AS HE PROGRESSES DOWN THE ROAD TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT HE WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY UNCERTAIN WHY WE DO NOT ISSUE THE INVITATION WHICH THE OTHER TWO GLOBAL POWERS HAVE (HUSAIN SAYS THAT THE SOVIETS CONTINUE TO PRESS FOR ZIA TO VISIT BUT HE WISHES FIRST TO GO TH A MAJOR WESTERN COUNTRY).
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SCHNEIDER

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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 20 jun 1978
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
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